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Impact of Education on Sex Workers and Their Children: Case Studies from Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

In Bangladesh, sex workers and their children are in a state of exclusion where they are denied even the most basic human rights. This article is based on a recent research carried out to explore the impact of education on sex workers and their children's lives by gathering evidence on social exclusion and child abuse or protection in the context of their lives. The study focused on how education could be a vehicle for them to break the vicious cycle of exploitation. This was a mixed method interpretative study which employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. Quantitative data was generated through a questionnaire and qualitative data was generated through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Data was collected from different research participants such as sex workers, sex workers' children, teachers of sex workers' children and NGO workers working in the research site. Thematic and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis to understand the challenges and barriers faced by sex workers and their children in their educational aspirations. The lives of sex workers and their children are marginalised by the mainstream society. Though it is very difficult to break the vicious cycle of exploitation, this research finds that education may be a stepping stone for them to create a better future. However, sex workers and their children need income generating vocational and technical education to earn and support their family. In the implication section of the article, policy recommendations have been made in order to achieve Education For All (EFA) targets and Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and to provide a second chance for these vulnerable people to have a better life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Bangladesh, sex workers and their children are in a state of exclusion where they are denied even their most basic human rights such as housing, health and education because of many complex factors such as legal vacuum, lack of political commitment and mostly a conservative society. They are the victims of power structures in their community as well as greater society that leave them exposed to inhumane life conditions such as the obligation of drug abuse, lack of access to pure drinking water and sanitation, property rights and legal protection, extortion, trafficking and everyday violence.

In this context the children of the sex workers in Bangladesh are not in a safe environment and there is a lack of focus on their development with an increasing risk of them becoming victims of the dangerous racket of sex trade and exploitation (UNICEF, 2005). Children living in brothels have disproportionately limited access to education in Bangladesh (UNICEF 2009). The children of sex workers are still deprived of their right to education, few of them are enrolled in government schools. Most of them dream of rescuing their mothers from prostitution. However, in reality the children are often cruelly ragged about their mother's profession. Their identity makes it stressful for them to continue going to school (World News, 2010).

This study explores the impacts of education on the lives of the sex workers and their children by gathering evidence on social exclusion and child abuse or protection in the context of their lives. Furthermore it explores how education could be a vehicle for them to break the vicious cycle of exploitation. Information has been collected for analysing children's expectation and hope and the facilities they are receiving along with the parent's hope and way of support. It has also explored how local NGOs are supporting and providing education for children of sex workers.

1.1 Conceptual understanding

'Education empowers, provides choices, and a voice to disadvantaged children and young people. It also promotes health by teaching them about good health practices, active citizenship through developing skills for life and a sustainable future. In these ways it helps socio-economically disadvantaged children to break down the poverty cycle and to have a better future. It provides the stepping-stone to self-development for those who are disadvantaged by creating choices, and builds self-confidence and self-reliance for individuals' (Shohel, 2012, p.7).

Providing education and life skills training should be the main focus for sex workers' children to improve their life. According to the Child Rights Convention (CRC), every child has the right to be educated and children's rights have legal, political, social, cultural, economic, demographic and environmental dimensions. Among all vulnerable groups, children living in brothel areas are at high risk of deprivation, abuse, HIV transmission and trafficking. There is a very small scope of getting access to education. Children of brothel-based sex workers are stigmatised from birth. Their acceptance into the mainstream society is virtually impossible for which they often start working in the brothel themselves (Adhikari 2008, 2007).

1.2 Context of the study

Providing education to sex workers and their children is not an easy task. There are barriers from society, community as well as from the brothel. This study focuses on Daulatdia Brothel, where many NGOs are running education programmes for children of sex workers, such as Karmajibi Kallyan Sangstha (KKS), Mukti Mohila Samity (MMS), BRAC, Save the children, and ActionAid Bangladesh with its partner organisations.

In 1993 KKS established a preschool to provide informal education for children who lived with their mothers in the brothel. An informal schooling for girls started at the pilot level with 25 girls inside the Daulatdia brothel. Simultaneously four satellite education centers were established with 100 children outside the brothel area. This was the first attempt to provide education to sex workers' children in Bangladesh. There were problems when sex workers' children enrolled in regular schools. It was difficult for teachers and students to accept them as equals to their classmates. Children from mainstream society were not ready to sit with the sex workers' children and as a result the children eventually dropped out.

In 1995 a private school had been established with the help of Save the Children (formerly Save the Children Australia) for providing education for sex workers' children and the children from the mainstream society under one roof. The ratio of inclusion was 2:3 (mainstream children: sex workers' children). The main barrier which stood in the way of running this school was the mainstream community. At first the school was not getting any students other than sex workers' children. However, gradually students from hardcore poor family started to get enrolled in the school. Now the school is running with success and has earned considerable recognition. Children from all socio-economic backgrounds come to study here along with the sex workers' children. Even parents of different backgrounds including sex workers attend parent-teacher meetings and other school programmes.

Shapla Mohila Shangstha (SMS), implementation partner of ActionAid Bangladesh (AAB) in Faridpur, operates a child development center under the 'Promoting Human Rights of Destitute Women and Children Project'. The center was established in 2004 to bring sex workers' children to mainstream society and enhance their life skills. At the center, the children are provided with facilities including day and night shelter, a healthy diet, mainstream education as well as extra curricular and recreational activities. Currently the rented house of the center can accommodate only 25 children but a new permanent building, which is under construction, will be able to house another 75 children.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

An explicit systematic literature review was carried out including policy documents and 'grey literature'. The literature review was fed into the different stages of the research process and into the reporting of the study in this article.

2.1 Understanding of different concepts

"Education focuses on the increase of knowledge, social awareness, behavioural and moral awareness and understanding the latest innovative information. The prime objective of the activities is building a concrete

foundation for achieving successful life. Hence, the message is obvious and clear that education as a whole is the aggregation of all schemes whichever develops the capability of a person” (Anderson, 2010).

A sex worker is a person who works in the sex industry, specifically, a person who commercially trades in sex or sexual stimulation. The term ‘sex worker’ is usually used in reference to those in the sex industry that actually provide such sexual services, as opposed to management and staff of such industries. Some sex workers are paid to engage in sexually explicit behaviour which involves varying degrees of physical contact with customers. On the basis of nature and location, sex workers are classified into some categories like seasonal sex workers, commercial sex workers, floating sex workers, disguised sex workers (i.e. students, housewives), street sex workers, brothel sex workers, and call girls etc (Ali, Undated).

Oxford Dictionary defines Child as ‘a young human being below the age of puberty or below the legal age of majority’. A child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier (Collins English Dictionary, 2009).

2.2 Understanding of the research problem

In Bangladesh, normally ‘sex trade’ is not legal except in fifteen brothels across the country (Alauddin, undated). Women and children are found involved in sex trade in these brothels from all social strata, caste and religion. They are the most deprived, tormented, ill-treated and misused people like many other developing countries. Daulodia brothel is the most recent one within the country and, after the expulsion of Tanbazar brothel in 1999, it became the largest one in Bangladesh (Terre des hommes Italia, 2005). Although sex work always existed in Bangladesh and took many changing forms, sex workers remained ignored and avoided by researchers. However, over the years a handful number of researches have been conducted (Karim, 2004).

A study on living conditions and socio-economic status of brothel based and floating sex workers in Bangladesh made a general assessment of their living conditions and found that the reasons for entering the brothels are poverty, deception, abuse, coercion and rape. Most of the sex workers come from an ultra poor background and are usually illiterate or have a low level of education and no marketable skills. They generally face disruption of the family units and their lives, along with their childrens’, are full of suffering (Terre des homes Italia, 2005).

A study (UNICEF, 2011) has been done to review and assess the “National Plan of Action 2002” to combat child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. The study found perpetrators of child sexual abuse to be men in the vast majority of cases. This study found that the National Plan of Action is a broad based, well structured and clearly written document which identifies issues, objectives, strategies and partners in prevention, protection, recovery and reintegration of child victims of sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking. But it also found that the National Plan of Action has some gaps, such as insufficient attention to sex and gender, narrow focus on children on the street and in brothels, failure to include parents as partners, failure to create safe havens to strengthen the capacity of children who are at risk or are victims of sexual abuse or exploitation, lack of appropriate laws and policies and ineffective implementation.

Different research findings show that parents’ drug use or sex work is often illegal and hidden and identifying their children can be difficult and may increase the children’s vulnerability and marginalisation. Researchers

and service providers, therefore, need to proceed with caution when attempting to reach these populations, but documentation and evaluation of current programmes should be prioritised (Beard et al, 2010).

2.3 Knowledge gaps

Though many NGOs are running education programmes for sex workers' children, no research has been done regarding the impact of education on sex workers and their children's lives. It is very important to understand challenges and barriers to access to education for sex workers and their children and how education impacts their lives. This understanding is essential to facilitate empowerment of sex workers and their children and to bring them out from the curse of exploitation and social isolation. Literature related to sex workers and their children's education are hardly found although adequate studies are available on their health issues, socio-economic status, abuse and violence.

3. METHODOLOGY

The mix method interpretative study focused on sex workers and their children (who are 5 to 16 years old) where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed to have a better understanding and triangulation of the generated data. Major part of the study is based on qualitative methods and findings, whereas the quantitative part was relevant to support, validate and judge the qualitative findings. The information was collected through survey questionnaires of socio economic information, interview schedule for sex workers and their children, focus group discussions (FGD) guidelines for teachers, NGO resource personnel and education activists.

3.1 Selection of the research site

The geographical location of the study is Daulatdia Ghat of Rajbari Sadar Upazila, situated on the bank of the river Padma. The area is situated about 130 km away from Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. Among the fifteen recognised brothels, Daulatdia brothel is the largest brothel in Bangladesh. The brothel is located close to a very busy ferry port in Rajbari district in the West of Bangladesh and has been operating more than 25 years. It encourages a culture of corruption, violence, gambling, alcohol use, drug use and dealing, open screening of explicit films and sex workers seeking customers. Approximately 3,000 people are living inside the brothel including 1,000 children, 240 of whom are working as sex workers (some from the age of 8 upwards). These children are regularly exposed to sexual and physical violence. They are known to consume drugs and alcohol from as young as 10 years old (Save the Children Australia).

The brothel provides financial benefits to a whole range of individuals, which means that there are many people in positions of power who have a vested interest in the brothel continuing to function in its current form, including the promotion of child prostitution. Mothers do not know how to protect their children from sexual and other abuse, exploitation and violence. Children are vulnerable to physical violence and sexual, physical and emotional abuse from a range of perpetrators including their peers and mothers' customers. Although most of the focus is on the protection of girls, boys are often victims too.

There are many educational programmes running in and around the Daulatdia brothel performing the function of training sex workers for a “better life” and to promote the access of the sex workers’ children to the formal education system by sensitising the society. This study aims at promoting their rights and exploring the impact of education on sex workers and their children.

3.2 Sampling and profile of the research participants

Purposive sampling method was employed on the basis of availability by using the snowball sampling technique. At first, thirty sex workers’ families had been selected purposively from the brothel. The selection criterion for the families was to have at least one school going children in the family. The number of sex workers’ children that participated in this study was thirty. Twenty of the sample students were from primary level and rest were from secondary level. Efforts were made to ensure gender balance among the respondents. Thirty sex workers were selected for interview. Eight primary and eight secondary teachers of the sex workers’ children schools as well as eight NGO workers were selected purposively for three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Hence, the total number of the sample was 114 (Figure-1).

Figure 1: Sample Size of the Study

Respondents	Total Number
Sex Worker Family	30
Sex Worker Children	30 (20 Primary + 10 Secondary)
Sex Workers (mother + guardian)	30
Teacher of Sex worker children	16 (8 Primary + 8 Secondary)
NGO Workers	8
Total	114

The sex workers’ families sampled are situated both inside and outside the brothel. The sex workers hold various positions such as *bharatia* (free sex worker who works independently by renting a room in the brothel and controls her own earnings) and *bariwali* (female owner of a brothel home) (Terre des homes Italia, 2005). Teachers were selected from such schools which had been primarily established for the children of the brothel and the NGO workers selected were among those who work inside and outside of the brothel for the education and welfare of the children (of the brothel).

3.3 Approach and procedures of the research

As stated above, a mixed method approach comprising of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods was deployed using a variety of data collection instruments.

During systematic literature review, the team prepared an analytic document on stakeholder engagement strategy and then intensive sharing and feedback sessions were conducted on draft research tools to develop

the final ones. Afterwards the team had an effective piloting of the tools and the instruments were finalized with relevant changes based on the feedback from the pilot phase. In the data collection process quantitative data collection was followed by qualitative data collection through interviews and FGDs. The research team produced biweekly reports which enabled it to focus on progress and address the challenges faced during the research.

3.4 Research methods and techniques

For conducting the research a very intensive methodology and number of data collection tools were used. For data collecting and processing, ICT toolkits, such as: laptop and notebook, tape recorders and digital cameras were used. Software such as Microsoft office (MS word, excel) and SPSS-17 had been used to analyze and process the data.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As it is not always easy to identify and respond to ethical dilemmas (Holland & Kilpatrick, 1991), an obvious question in social research is: how were the ethical issues and dilemmas negotiated in the real world? The study adopted a code of practice which entailed obtaining informed consent from head teachers, teachers, sex workers and their children, and the related authorities of the NGOs involved in the study site, using all information under strict confidentiality and anonymity, showing attitudes of tolerance, empathy and respect towards the socio-cultural norms and taboos of sex workers, taking gender balance into consideration in case of constituting the sample, taking interviews at times and places convenient for the respondents, and spending sufficient time in the field to keep close contact with the participants to build rapport. Due to suppression and taboo, the sex industry is largely underground; so the collected data has been kept confidential in order to protect the community from any kind of harm and distress. Throughout the study, ethical issues were addressed consciously in a professional manner. This study was carried out by following the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) and the British Psychological Society (BPS, 1995).

3.6 Bias and challenges in the field

During the process of collecting data and reporting the findings, the team made the best effort to be free from any kind of bias. Some of the sex workers do not know their exact age, so the team had to depend on their judgment which may not have been accurate. The students living in the safe homes of different organisations were not allowed to give interviews privately. Instead several care givers were present which may have influenced their responses in some cases.

The work of brothel based sex workers requires them to be “on the move” and it was difficult to conduct structured interviews with them. The environment inside the brothel was very noisy. Some of the respondents gave interviews in the presence of other sex workers and relatives. Some of the sex workers living outside the brothel were not willing to disclose their identity or to provide information relating to their profession. When they were assured that their identity would be kept confidential, only then were they willing to cooperate. Being the subject of different researches conducted in recent past, a few of the respondents were reluctant at the beginning of the interview process as they were not benefitted directly by previous researches. Therefore the team had to spend much time to motivate them.

The secondary school teachers were not able to identify the sex workers' children. The data collection took place during the month of Ramadan when the secondary schools also closed early. As a result, the team had to make some changes in the ratio of sample size. To keep the total sample size unchanged the number of primary students was increased, while secondary students were decreased to some extent. But the team had collected data from various settings, which is expected to reduce this methodological flaw.

3.7 Limitations of the study

The sample size for the quantitative part of the study was 30 which were not enough to carry out any statistical analysis for generalization. The study is based on data collected from one of the brothels in Bangladesh and does not necessarily generalize situation of sex workers and their children across the country.

4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

'Grounded theory approach was employed to carryout data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).' To analyze the data the process suggested by Marshal & Rossman (1999), where they recommend following the sequence of organising the data, developing the themes and then interpreting the data, was adopted. For the qualitative part of the study, thematic analysis was followed and the results grouped together to answer the research questions. Only descriptive statistical analysis was done to enrich the qualitative analysis with the support of quantitative findings. Thirty case studies of sex workers children were drawn from the derived data which illustrated the overall findings of the research. Peer debriefing (Spall, 1998) was done before finalising the report.

4.1 Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data

4.1.1 Opportunities for education

Age at which sex workers' children were admitted in school varied. Generally they got admitted in school at the age of 4-5 years . Average age of starting school is 6 years. Very few sex workers' children got admitted in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) programme of Mukti Mohila Somiti (MMS) at the age of 2 and half to 3 years. Some children go to school at the age of 8 or 9. Generally sex workers' children start the ECD pre-primary programme at the age of 3 and subsequently go to the KKS primary school at the age of 5 to 6. This is the same scenario with mainstream children.

NGOs and individuals have made efforts to create opportunities for the sex worker's children to continue their study. MMS provides pre-primary education through 10 pre-primary centers and 3 informal education groups. Total number of children in pre-primary centers is 202 and total number of students in the informal education programme is 60. KKS schools provide education from primary to higher secondary level for the sex workers' children. MMS and KKS are mostly financed by international organisations. Besides this, PIACT Bangladesh provides accommodation for some sex workers' children. The girls of sex workers can study up to SSC and HSC level in Abdul Zobbar Girls High School and College. In Daulotdia Model High School (DMHS) both boys and girls can study from Grade VI to Grade X. After passing HSC exams they go to colleges such as Goalongdo College and Rajbari Government College. Some of them also go to polytechnic

institutes in Dhaka, Chittagong, Kushtia as well as in other areas.

In 1993 the founder of KKS started to provide informal education for children who lived with their mothers in the brothel. Later on an informal school for girls had been started as a pilot project with 25 teenage girls inside the Daulatdia brothel. Simultaneously four satellite education centers were formed with 100 children outside the brothel area. This was the first attempt to provide education to sex workers' children in Bangladesh. But it was difficult to continue the effort.

In 1995, the KKS Private School was established with the help of Save the Children (formerly known as Save the Children Australia) to provide education to sex workers' children. At that time, the community showed an unwillingness to let their children study with the sex workers' children. Afterwards, however, Save the Children organized meetings with the community several times to convince them about inclusive education for sex workers' children with the mainstream children so that the sex workers' children could be socially included. Save the Children succeeded to manage 5 girls from the brothel and arranged their accommodation, food and education free of cost. From the FGD with the teachers of high school, it was found that the school was established in 1995 and it was recognised and brought under Government funding in 2004. The sex workers' children started to study in this school in 1997. Though the school was established in 1997, the mainstream community was not motivated to send children to the school as the sex workers' children studied there. Finally, NGO workers negotiated with the community people and managed to convince some of them to send their children to the school.

Children receive books, pen, notebooks and school dresses from the KKS School as well as hostel fees. Among the children respondents, 29 out of 30 stated to have all the study materials such as study space, chair, table, pen and notebook. Only one child lacks study materials. All primary school children's tuition fee and other expenses are covered. But in secondary level children have to pay the tuition fee and other fees of school. They have to pay on an average TK 666 in a year for that 21 children have private tutors while the rest do not. On an average they spend TK 5,314 in a year for the private tuition expenses. From the responses it was evident that 21 out of 30 children can bear the expenses while the rest hardly can. No one gets any scholarship or financial support from either the government or from any other organisations working in that area except the children residing in safe homes.

Most sex workers struggle to provide the essential things to their children as their financial condition is not so good. They may even have to take loans at a high interest rate to meet their children's need regarding education. The schools and safe residence authority run by NGOs provide the necessary educational materials which helped them to carry on their study. The MMS teachers also give free private tuition to some poor sex workers' children. Safe home of KKS is providing accommodation for 50 girls and PIACT Bangladesh is providing accommodation for 20 children (18 girls and 2 boys). There they are getting proper environment of living and study.

As most sex workers' children are first generation learners, there is no one in their home who can help them with their study. Only 14 out of 30 children interviewed, get help with their study at their residence from their elder sister or brother, but rest of them do not have that opportunity. They do their homework themselves without assistance from anyone. Safe residences authority appointed some care givers who help the children

with their study in their residence.

The local NGO MMS arranged child caring sessions for the sex workers but the sex workers failed to apply the learning in practice. MMS staff thinks that it would be better if they could train the mothers more. There are many sex workers who cannot give enough attention to their children's education because of poverty and their living conditions. Those who are solvent enough send their children to the Kindergarten school. MMS has a project called 'Shishu Shurokkha' where they trained 300 mothers (sex workers) about the rights of their child through 30 facilitators. They think that if they could arrange some income generating programmes as well as awareness building activities for the sex workers, it would be more helpful for them. They believe that these children should be provided better education. If they receive better education they will be able to get socially recognized jobs which will help them to lead their life with honour and status.

4.1.2 Challenges to access to education

Sex workers' children are not recognized in the society as having any dignity. People look down upon them and regularly deprive them from their rights. As NGOs have been taking initiatives to change such perceptions, access to education along with the mainstream society has become easier for them. Especially after establishment of the KKS primary school and the safe homes of Save the Children and PIACT Bangladesh, the situation has started to improve and access of sex workers' children has become easy both in primary and secondary schools. Because of the NGO support, their school performance and quality of education has become satisfactory. For example a sex workers' daughter got a GPA (Grade Point Average) of 4.88 (out of 5) in the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam and another received a scholarship in grade V. Now many of them are also able to get admitted to the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) course or in some other stage of further education.

After completing primary education most sex workers' children do not enrol into secondary school. At primary level, schooling and study materials are free. But in secondary they only get free textbooks but have to pay fees. Therefore, their economic condition starts creating a barrier to continuing education. Average yearly family income of the research participants of this study is TK 2,186 only.

Though sex workers' children are getting support from community and NGOs, their dropout rate is still 27 (specially the boys of sex workers' families). Girls often complete a level but they have to stop if their mothers force them to do so. Generally girls drop out if their mothers force them to join their own profession or if the mothers get them married. Boys drop out due to lack of interest in education and if their mothers stop supporting them. The high school teachers mentioned that the dropout rate is very negligible at secondary level. It may be 1% or 2%. About 4 years ago, one girl left the school as her mother forced her to follow her profession. But this type of case is very rare.

Some of the children said that they didn't feel comfortable in schools, for which their experiences were not good all the time. Some of the regular students have a tendency towards behaving badly with them owing to their identity as children of sex workers. The boys play pranks on the girls and tease them. Though most of the teachers are good, some are prejudiced; they are less attentive to those students whose mothers are sex workers.

The children of sex workers do not tend to have many friends in their locality as they think that the local people are not welcoming and treat them bad. The children of sex workers are forbidden by their mothers to mix with the local people. While the children living in the safe homes have good relationship with their room-mates as they don't go outside of the homes very often. However, the sex workers' children are now found to be getting along well with other children in their schools and are becoming more accepted in the school environment. But nevertheless they have to encounter several difficulties to continue their education. One difficulty mentioned by some respondents was the lack of proper study conditions. Moreover, some children are losing their motivation to go to school as they are not treated well with dignity because of their mothers' identity. Some parents are also struggling to manage their child's educational expenses such as private tutor fees, expenses to buy study materials. Others do not want to go to school as they are afraid of the teachers' scolding them.

According to the teachers, the boys do not continue their study because of lack of proper guidance from their family. When they get involved in any income generating activity they are discouraged from going to school. Some of them collect wine, drugs and cigarettes for their mothers' clients and get paid for the service. Slowly they get involved in this and, eventually, stop going to school.

Some of the sex workers whose children live in the safe home of KKS have to pay according to their ability. The students get facility to stay there and tutors are made available to them who teach them in private. Some of them occasionally get monetary help when their families cannot pay tuition fees due to financial difficulties but this help is found to be insufficient.

According to Government rules, 30% girls and 10% boys get stipend. Some of them are required to pay examination fees but it is not mandatory for the poor students. If the school authority finds that the education of a student is going to be hindered due to lack of funds, they allow the student the opportunity to appear in exams without any fee. The school also provides them with school uniform if they are unable to buy it themselves.

Sex workers' children are treated differently because of their mothers' professional identity. Sometimes the other children use abusive language with sex workers' children causing pain and insecurities. Some sex workers hide their identity which saves their children from this social phenomenon.

Most of the students believe that financial insolvency is the main challenge in attaining their goals. The support they get from their families seem insufficient to them. In addition to that the students living inside the brothel think that the environment of that place presents a great barrier for them to shine. For daughters of sex workers, there exists the continuous external pressure for early marriage. Some students say that they do not get proper attention from the teachers due to the large number of students. They face lots of other challenges in fulfilling their aspirations, including, their parents' protectiveness, sexual harassment and the constant fear of being trafficked.

Sometimes poverty-stricken or otherwise vulnerable women and children, especially orphans, become victims of trafficking. Dalals (agents who are engaged in collecting and selling women or children to the brothels) offer them jobs and lure them in different ways to come to the brothel. The entrants at Daulotdia

brothel often comprise of people from these disadvantaged groups. Some NGOs such as PIACT Bangladesh and MMS are working extensively to prevent under-aged children from becoming victims of trafficking. The teachers at the schools added that they are also working with the NGO workers in this cause. If they see any under-aged children or women becoming victims of trafficking, they help them come out of the brothel and try to return them to their families with the help of the local administration and some other Islamic organizations. There is a committee for this purpose and they organize meetings on different times. The teachers also take part in these meetings.

Children of sex workers have the same potential as other children but most of them suffer from poor attention guidance. Teachers are often very conscious about their studies but they do not perform well because of a lack of proper study conditions at home and due to lack of guidance from their families. Some parents do not want their children to continue their education but the teachers try to motivate them to continue their study and persuade the guardians to keep them away from the sex trade. Their class attendance rate is lower than other students at primary level, but the situation is opposite at secondary level.

4.1.3 Impact of education

Quantitative data shows that the sex workers had different educational backgrounds ranging from Grade III to Grade X, and some have no schooling at all. Among 30 sex workers 13 are literate and 17 are illiterate. Different causes have acted behind the educational barriers of the sex workers. Economic barrier was the dominating one. Most of them could not continue their studies as their parents could not provide the support they need.

The sex workers do not have the formal educational qualifications to ensure a job. This causes an inevitable financial insecurity for them. But even then they feel that there have been some impacts of education in their lives. They reported that there is no application of their education inside the brothel apart from using their existing knowledge for some simple numeracy and literacy applications of daily life. Beyond these aspects, however, the sex workers were of the opinion that education had made them conscious about their rights.

Most NGO workers and teachers believe that general education is not enough for improving the well-being of the children of sex workers. So they need to have some technical and vocational education which would provide them with a real opportunity to enter the job market. None of the schools where the brothel children study arrange any kind of skill based training or job oriented education. Nevertheless, some NGOs and safe residence authorities had arranged some skill based training programs for the brothel children so that they can earn a living from a socially recognized profession in the future. According to a few respondents, the sex workers did not allow their children to attend this kind of training before completing their education. The safe residence authorities have taken initiatives for co-curricular activities such as singing, dancing, drawing, reciting, cooking, and tailoring.

Only few sex workers are involved in their children's school as guardians. Most of them do not want to visit the school as they feel embarrassed to be in front of teachers and other guardians because of their occupational identity. Nevertheless, they do visit the school to be informed about their children's educational progress and to collect their children's report cards. They also participate in the parent-teacher meetings and

annual sports days. Some of the sex workers who have high aspiration with their children's future also expressed dissatisfaction with their child's educational progress. But most of them were pleased with the very fact that their children are going to school to be educated.

Some respondents feel that some of the children were not behaving well with their parents and others before going to school. They did not want to help their mothers with their household chores. After starting to go to school the sex workers' children showed some positive changes in their behaviour. They became conscious about their education, health and everyday use of language. After going to school the children now respect their elders. Though there are many positive changes among the sex workers' children according to the respondents, some parents did not observe any mentionable changes among their children.

There is evidence to suggest that sex workers feel that education has a positive impact on their children's lives and that their behavioural changes are satisfactory. After receiving education they have stopped using slangs in their daily conversations. There is evidence to believe that in some cases education helped the children to come out from bad influences.

It was observed that parents are apprehensive about the social situation regarding the safety of their children. Very often their daughters are harassed and sometimes the situation may become even worse; according to two interviewees a school girl was allegedly raped (few days before the field visit) and the parents, as a result, demanded safe commutation of their child from home to school.

Some of the students think their schooling and education is the most significant event of their life. They think that without education children may become involved in illegal activities, such as drug dealing. According to the children the teachers of their schools are very cooperative and inspire them to be educated. Their teachers contribute to their aspirations. Their inspiration has helped them to bring change in their lives. Their teachers have assured them that if they themselves are not interested to follow their mothers' profession, no one can force them to do so.

The students think that education is helping them in every sphere of their lives. It has influenced their personal and social life to a large extent. As they are going to school and receiving education, they are treated with respect and appreciation. Their social status has improved. They think that they will be able to be well established and self-reliant by receiving education. They will get a good job and be financially solvent. Moreover, they also feel that if they can change their economic conditions, it will be possible for their mothers to leave their profession and come out from the brothel. They will get the opportunity to live with the general people with 'dignity' and will not be socially isolated. They feel that all the family members will be able to live a happy life together.

Some students think that if they are not educated they will be exploited at every steps of their life. They will remain illiterate and will not get any good job. They will be forced to go inside the brothel and follow their mothers' profession.

Education is the most important for sex workers' children because it can help them to improve their lives as well to help their families. Sex trade has no long term future and one will have to quit after a certain age. Most

sex workers have financial difficulties. Therefore through education, their children can arrange rehabilitation for their mother. They can also get involved in some income generating occupations after receiving education. Thus education is also helpful for their mainstreaming to society.

There is reason to believe that education is bringing changes to the attitudes and behaviour of the children of sex workers. The head teacher of primary school significantly noted that education is also helpful in building awareness among the sex workers. It is also helpful in discouraging them from crime. They are more likely to be aware of the detrimental effects of drugs and other abused substances. Education can be used as a weapon by the sex workers and their children to protect them from the environment they live in.

Education is one of the basic human rights and no one should be deprived from this right. The study can safely state that if the children profiled did not get education, they would be more prone to crime and following their mothers' footsteps into the profession. According to MMS staffs their organisation succeeded to include almost 100% brothel children in their Early Childhood Care and Development (ECD) Programme.

4.2 Discussion

Sex workers and their children are socially isolated from the mainstream society in Bangladesh. Many inter-linked factors such as cultural background, social surroundings and physical facilities shape the life of a child of a sex worker. Early experiences from school, physical surroundings, with relatives, reception from others also play a significant role in their lives.

Sex workers' children who receive education are employed in or choose different jobs such as teaching, driving, as paramedics or even day labourers. The primary school teachers mentioned that some of them start their own businesses, such as photography shops and computer workshops. High school teachers added that some even go for higher education in universities and polytechnic institutes. Those who are still studying, have aspirations to be involved in good professions. They feel that it is necessary to change their and their families' lives and that in order to do so they must leave the brothel.

From the interviews it was evident that boys from the brothel who do not go to school usually become addicted with drugs or get involved in drug dealing. Some also start acting as pimps for sex workers. The girls who drop out of school or who do not receive education at all, are usually prone to following their mothers' footsteps in to the profession.

Though sex workers have many problems they generally want their children to continue education as long as possible. They struggle with finances but, nevertheless, want to support their children. They expect that their children will achieve higher education and will live their lives with dignity and social status.

The students along with their parents have the expectation that they will receive higher education one day. They think that they will be able to get a good job or run a good business if they become educated. Some of the children of sex workers want to go abroad to get higher education. Most of the students feel they are more likely to attain their desired level of education since their parents are willing to show support for their education. They also believe that they will get support from their families in the future the same way they are getting it at present.

As they have financial difficulties in their lives the education for the children of sex workers should be at the level and of the quality which will help them attain solvency in the future. Therefore, technical and vocational education is needed to provide them with opportunities to enter the job market immediately after completing their education.

Majority of the sex workers expect that their children would grow up to not follow their footsteps and be engaged in a different service or profession. Sometimes these parents are afraid especially that their daughters might follow their footsteps. This apprehension may motivate them to marry their daughters off after they pass SSC or college. It has also been observed that parents have different expectations and dreams for their children to be a part of society, though many different factors influence their aspirations.

After the completion of education, most of the students expect to get good jobs. They aspire to become doctors, engineers, lawyers, pilots, teachers, business persons and so on. One student said that it is his hobby to work with machines and he would like to invent new things. But most of the students said that their mothers expect them to be good human beings at first. Their mothers would like to see them established in life so that they can take the responsibility of the family.

Education is working as an empowerment tool for sex workers and their children. The NGO staff reported that after receiving education they are already taking up professions like teaching. Using their education they are trying to facilitate their mothers' exit from the brothel. Their education is acting as a bridge between them and the outside world. The view shared by many is that those who did not complete their education had higher chances of being involved in the sex trade. It was found that providing technical training beside general education to these children could be a better option for their livelihood.

None of the sex worker respondents wanted their children to follow their path or to be engaged in the sex trade. Some sex workers reported that they did not want to make the same "mistake" again by letting their children come in to their profession.

Sex workers and their children are one of the neglected groups in the society. Nevertheless they want to see their children as "good citizens". Most of them have high aspirations with their children's future and have sent their children to school since they are concerned about their children's future. They have admitted their children in school so that the children can avail the chance to grow up as "dignified" human beings.

5. FINDINGS

This chapter interprets the results of the study and discusses the general findings of the research questions.

5.1 Opportunity for getting access to and to continue education

- Sex workers' children did not face any problem getting admission in the schools. They start their pre-primary education from MMS and a special school called the KKS School. They get all necessary materials like books, stationery and uniforms from the schools. The school environment is also good which encourages higher attendance.

- Sex workers' children perform well in co-curricular activities such as reciting poems, singing, dancing, stand up comedy, quiz competitions, indoor and outdoor games in the cultural programmes and annual sports competitions organized by the schools. Some other students practice drawing, singing and dancing in the MMS ECD Center. The sex workers' children also perform well in exams. Some of them got more than 80% marks in the previous exams and they are satisfied with their results.
- Most of the sex workers' children reported that school is their most favourite place since they can learn many things and can play with their friends.
- Some children live in safe homes of KKS and PIACT Bangladesh. They do not need family support for their studies and are provided with conducive conditions for studies at the homes. The students have friends in their schools. They have cordial relationships and spend time together.
- Sometimes the children of sex workers visit the houses of community children and vice versa.

5.2 Challenges in getting access to and continuing education

- Few teachers have been reported to be prejudiced and biased. They have been found to be giving less attention to students whose mothers are sex workers.
- Sometimes other students behave badly with the students who are sex workers' children due the occupational identity of their mothers.
- The children of sex workers are severely deprived of their mothers' affection, love and care. They do not like their mother's profession and they want to bring them out of the brothel. Absence of paternal identity and care has also been noticed as a reason for insecurity among the children. Most of their fathers have other families and children.
- Usually, children of sex workers' do not get any help for their studies at home. Those who live in brothel shared that the brothel does not act as a supportive environment for studies.
- After completing primary education most sex workers' children are not enrolling into secondary education. Economic problem creates a barrier here since life inside the brothel is already very costly.
- Because of financial difficulties, sex workers sometimes try to stop their daughters' education in order to get them engaged in sex work. Early marriage is one of the big challenges in the brothel locality as there is continuous pressure on the mothers to marry off their daughters at early ages. Marriage is used as evidence to 'prove' that a girl is eighteen so that she may be involved in sex trade.
- Security issue is a vital challenge for the girls as they are the most vulnerable of becoming trafficked while on their way to school. Sometimes they face sexual harassment and abusive comments from the local boys. At the moment, commutation from the school to their living places is not safe.
- Sometimes the male children are made to pick up wine, drugs and cigarette for their mothers' customers and paid for this. Gradually they get involved in running such errands and are discouraged from going to school.
- Most of the students from the brothel do not know their fathers' identity. As a result they face problems in getting government jobs⁸.

5.3 Role of Education to protect sex workers and their children

Getting enrolled in a school is reportedly the most significant event some of the children's lives. Education has influenced sex workers and their children's personal and social life to a large extent. Their

⁸Bangladesh government job forms usually require the father's name

social status has changed over time. Their children are treated to increased respect in the society as they go to school.

- The teachers' inspiration also helps the children aspire towards high goals and motivates them to be educated which. Others think that living in the safe homes, as opposed to the brothel, is one of the most defining factors of their present lives.
- After receiving education, their outlook about life is broadening gradually. They want to be well established, economically solvent and self-reliant persons by being educated. They hope and wish to contribute to their families and help their mothers live with "dignity" out of the isolated world of the brothel.
- Sex workers' children sometimes face inferiority complex due to lack of paternal care and identity which affects them psychologically. Usually students in schools are identified with their fathers' identity but most children born to sex workers children do not have that identity.

5.4 Impact of education on their lives

- Most sex workers could not finish their basic education because of poor economic backgrounds of their parents.
- Sex workers are now more concerned about their children's education than earlier. They keep regular contact with their children's schools to know about their progress.
- The children used to play around aimlessly all day with each other before they started going to school. Now they stay busy with learning, playing sports, household works or recreational activities like watching TV programmes, gossip with friends and family members during their leisure times.
- Sex workers' children's behaviour improved after admission in school. They started to respect people, stopped using slang words, and became motivated to study. None of the school going children used any medicine (such as steroids) for their early growth, a practice that could otherwise affect them if they were to be rushed into the brothel life.
- All the students have the desire to obtain higher education and they expect to get themselves admitted into universities for higher degrees. They think they will get support from their family and NGOs to get this education.
- They are becoming accepted as part of the society after being educated which a great improvement is from earlier. Now the children of the 'mainstream society' and the sex workers' children study in the same school.
- Sex workers' children who are already in touch with the mainstream society think that their mothers' profession is not a good one. They want to bring their families out of the brothel and live a normal life.
- Sex workers' children who complete education generally get involved in different jobs like teaching, NGO work, paramedic work, driving, etc. Some also get engaged in small businesses like photo studios, computer workshops, etc.
- Uneducated girls and girls who dropped out of school usually follow their mothers' foot step. Boys who are uneducated or have dropped out of school are generally engaged in illegal drug trading, running grocery shops and sometimes acting as pimps for sex workers.

5.5 Life skill based education to create better future

- There is no arrangement for skill based education programmes for the brothel children in the existing schools.
- Children living in the safe homes get some life skill based training such as tailoring or cooking but their scope is very limited.
- Most respondents believe that education can create a better future for the sex workers and their children. Through education they are getting the opportunity to interact with people of the 'outside world'. Education helps them to improve their and their families' lives.
- Most sex workers want their children to achieve higher education. Sex workers wish that their children will one day become doctors, businessmen, servicemen, journalists or engineers.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy implications for the state

The sex workers and their children should be treated like all other citizens of the country and their fundamental rights need to be similarly protected by law. Strong steps should be taken to save sex workers' children from any kind of abuse. There should be law to give sex workers' children the opportunity of applying and getting government job without the identity of their father as most of them lack this detail. The national education system should emphasize specially on the education of disadvantaged groups and the State should provide them with free of cost education. Special programmes should be undertaken for motivating sex workers to provide education to their children. Access should be equally smooth for sex workers' children in any kind of educational institutions. Sex workers' children's safety should be ensured, especially with regard to safe commutation to and from school. Safe accommodation should be arranged for the sex workers' children where they will get conditions that are conducive for their studies. Financial assistance such as stipend or education loan should be provided to sex workers' children to continue their studies.

6.2 Policy implications for the donor agencies

Donor agencies should focus more on the safety issues of the sex workers' children. They should take initiatives for accommodation of more sex workers' children. Moreover alternative income generating programs should be funded and initiated for the sex workers so that those who are engaged in sex trade unwillingly are provided with viable opportunities to leave.

6.3 Policy implications for national and international organisations

Some mechanisms need to be developed in the National Plan of Action to include mothers with other relevant partners such as NGOs, teachers, religious leaders and community leaders in the efforts for prevention, protection or reintegration of the children. It was apparent from the case studies that mothers play the most fundamental role in this regard so a greater role for them in the process is certainly called for. Close monitoring and supervision should be ensured for maximum output. Accommodation of large numbers of sex workers' children should be given more emphasis on any intervention. Children of sex workers should be

given some skill based training so that they can earn their living without engaging in the sex trade. Sex workers' children should not be treated differently by the teachers or other students because of their mothers' profession. A mental health care system needs to be established to provide counselling services and psychological treatment to the children who suffer from humiliation or psychological torment due to complex regarding their mothers' occupational identity. Local affluent communities should be encouraged to come forward and donate scholarship funds for helping this underprivileged group of children.

6.4 Policy implications for the mass media

Media should highlight some awareness building programs to promote inclusive education for sex workers' children with the 'mainstream' children. Adult learning programs needs to be organised for sex workers which will facilitate their children's education. Attitudinal change towards sex workers is necessary as their social class (as perceived by the common people) hinders their ability to be integrated with the mainstream community and participate in community affairs. Media can play a vital role in this regard. Media should highlight the contributions and success stories of donor agencies and of the state regarding their education.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 A snapshot of the study

The sex workers mostly end up in this trade from rural backgrounds and in the context of extreme poverty. They are mostly illiterate or hardly have experience of education up to the secondary level. The process of growing up as sex workers' children is a complex one in terms of the peculiarity of the family, its construction and role relation along with the socio-economic and cultural aspects. The problem of space and professional identity pushes out the sex workers' children from their mothers at an early stage of their life. The usual consequence of this is that the children neither get protection nor do they get the attachment with their mother and this in turn creates insecurities in them. But the safety and the education they receive through the support of NGOs mostly failed to provide the stepping stone to break out of the vicious cycle of exploitation and abuse. They need skill based and income generating education to earn and help themselves and their families financially.

7.2 A way forward

For improving the lives of sex workers and their children, education can play an important role. After completing education, sex workers' children can get involved in different income generating activities and bring their parents and family out of the brothel and provide for better conditions of living. Education changes the attitude and behavioural patterns of sex workers' children and that in turn creates the opportunity for them to be integrated to the 'mainstream society'. Education is a tool for them to protect themselves from the conditions they live in. Education builds awareness among the sex workers. It can build awareness about crime, drug and smuggling business. Therefore, the State, donor agencies, national and international NGOs should work together to provide skill-based vocational and technical education for the sex workers' and their children to facilitate their entry into the mainstream community.

7.3 Possibilities of further research

Exploratory research is required on whether sex workers' and their children can be benefited from skill-based vocational and technical education which will help them to generate income to support themselves and their families. Moreover the focus of the study could be on trying to find out whether they are keen to develop their skills and use them to get out of the cycle of exploitation and poverty or whether they are more interested in following their parents' footsteps.

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